

Testimony of John Gatchell
Conservation Director, Montana Wilderness Association
February 16, 2009
Senate Natural Resources Committee
Re: Opposition to SJ 21

Thank you Mr Chairman and Committee Members. My name is John Gatchell. I serve as Conservation Director of the Montana Wilderness Association -- founded 50 years ago by Montanans to safeguard our state's wilderness heritage and quiet outdoor traditions.

Our members view Montana wilderness as a public land trust that will always provide great hunting, fishing, camping under the stars, and quiet mountain trails. Our western wild lands embody core American values: freedom, self-reliance, family, tradition.

In recent years our members have sought new approaches to old problems. Initiating dialogue, negotiation and collaboration aimed at building broad-based public land partnerships based on simple fact that Montana is a big state with rugged, diverse landscapes suited to differing combinations of management -the essence of true Multiple Use.

No one was surprised in 2002, when snowmobilers and conservationists were at odds over how to manage the Big Snowies Wilderness Study Area. But when we settled our differences and signed an agreement covering the Big Snowies *and* Little Belt Mountains two years later – this was something new.

One key principle to finding common ground is to look for give and take across a large mountain landscape.

SJ 21 is a legislative resolution that targets a large landscape level project -the Galton Project –just getting started on the Kootenai National Forest.

This Project covers a very large area–127,000 acres of national forest ranging from urban interface and productive timber lands at lower elevations to a rugged 34,000-acre wilderness study area in the crown of the mountains.

From the outset Fortine Ranger Betty Holder has worked very hard to bring people of diverse interests and viewpoints to the table. The goal is to involve people willing to cooperate with her staff to develop work plans for fuel reduction, road and trail work, logging, travel management, campground improvements,

watershed, fisheries and wildlife habitat improvements across a wide swath of Kootenai National Forest - predominantly in the Galton Range east of Eureka.

This is important work, work that is necessary for U. S. Forest Service to meet its duties and responsibilities under the law.

This resolution is premature; no outcomes, no alternatives have yet been proposed by the District Ranger. In fact the Ranger is now inviting public comments on work projects people feel are most needed on this large landscape.

The resolution provides contradictory directions. On the one hand the resolution calls repeatedly for the Ranger to follow the will of congress –meaning the law. On the other hand the resolution offers blanket prescriptions for this landscape that cannot be implemented without breaking the law.

For example the fifth ‘THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED’ would put the legislature on record directing the Ranger to establish “at least one loop road in each drainage.” Yet the work Project Area includes scenic backcountry and wilderness study areas

where public access and enjoyment has long been on trails, not roads.

There are errors of fact: For example the size of the 10 Lakes Scenic Area is 15,700 acres not 34,000 acres; the total statewide acreage of the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act is off by a factor of ten. There is no deadline in this law which requires the Ranger to "maintain presently-existing wilderness character...until Congress determines otherwise" within the study area.

But even if all factual errors were corrected the resolution is misguided in criticizing a large project that offers a great opportunity to bring people together, set aside differences and put people to work managing this beautiful landscape.

If we are going to end the gridlock that paralyzes every aspect of management on Montana's national forests we need to get past the all or nothing approach.

Today – conservationists are building new partnerships with Montana sawmills –turning long time adversaries into partners in managing large and diverse national forest landscapes.

Our members are working in partnership with snowmobilers in places like Seeley Lake, Ovando, Phillipsburg, Lewistown and Lincoln. Across the state, collaborative groups are springing up to build new national forest partnerships with great potential to break gridlock.

The Galton Project covers a large landscape with room for many interests –logging, fuel reduction, loop roads, snowmobile areas, quiet trails and wilderness.

The ranger, a native of Eureka, Montana, is trying very hard to bring people together, to meet her legal duties and break through years of paralyzing gridlock created by polarized positions. She deserves your support.

I urge you to vote against passage of this resolution.

Thank you.

Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960

- Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat. 215; 16 U.S.C. 528(note), 528-531)

Sec. 1. It is the policy of the Congress that the National Forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes. The purposes of this Act are declared to be supplemental to, but not in derogation of, the purposes for which the National Forests were established as set forth in the Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. 475). Nothing herein shall be construed as affecting the jurisdiction or responsibilities of the several States with respect to wildlife and fish on the National Forests. Nothing herein shall be construed so as to affect the use or lands or administration of the mineral resources of National Forest lands or to affect the use or administration of Federal lands not within National Forests. (16 U.S.C. 528)

Sec. 2. The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and directed to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the National Forests for multiple use and sustained yield of the several products and services obtained therefrom. In the administration of the National Forests due consideration shall be given to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. The establishment and maintenance of areas of wilderness are consistent with the purposes and provisions of this Act. (16 U.S.C. 529)

Sec. 3. In the effectuation of this Act the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to cooperate with interested State and local governmental

agencies and others in the development and management of the National Forests. (16 U.S.C. 530)

Sec. 4. As used in this Act, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Multiple use" means the management of all the various renewable surface resources of the National Forests so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of the land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; that some land will be used for less than all of the resources; and harmonious and coordinated management of the various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output.

(b) "Sustained yield of the several products and services" means the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the National Forests without impairment of the productivity of the land. (16 U.S.C. 531)

Sec. 5. This Act may be cited as the "Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960." (16 U.S.C. 528(note))



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service



The Principal Laws Relating To Forest Service Activities



SECRET

U.S. DOCUMENTS COLLECTION
GOVT. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

NOV 9 1983

342
MONTANA STATE LIBRARY